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NSC BRIEFING CONFIDENTIAL 24 June 1954

IMDOCHINA

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I. [redacted] paints dismal delta picture.

A. Inevitable withdrawal French corps.

1. Consensus 35 French officers similar.

2. Preparations withdrawal under way -- bulldozing beaching points Haiphong.

3. Hanoi-Haiphong LOC open only two to three hours daily; evacuation Hanoi would force abandonment depot stocks amounting to 600 train loads.

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DOCUMENT NO.
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
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CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE:
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: REVIEWER: 3/2004

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II. [redacted] Viet Minh capa[illegible]s all-out attack any time after 1 July.

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A. [redacted] more probable after 15 September for following reasons:

1. Enemy can significantly improve its delta position during next few months at small cost.
2. Battle corps has replacements needing training.
3. Minimum two months' preparations usually made before major attacks.

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B. [redacted] if enemy sees improvement civilian morale or probable internationalization of war it would immediately commit battle corps for early decisive victory.

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III. [redacted] French believe 500 potential Viet Minh truck drivers sent from delta to Thai Nguyen area will replace borrowed Chinese drivers.

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[redacted]

IV. Cogny believes battle corps delta perimeter ready move "at any time."

A. Says if he were Viet Minh commander, he would have attacked delta two weeks ago.

1. Cogny thinks political considerations might explain delay.

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V. [redacted] large quantities Chinese aid crossed border past several weeks.



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A. Materiel largely ammo and heavy weapons; 36 to 50 105mm howitzers.

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VI. Regardless plans major assault, early intensification delta activity forecast.

[redacted] 25X1C



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1. French undecided whether this would be part of attack on entire delta or only limited campaign.

B. Strong additional attacks Hanoi-Haiphong LOC by several enemy battalions expected.

1. Units may first turn against Ke Sat-Hung Yen route, isolate strategic Hung Yen.

C. Report of 37mm AA defenses near Haiduong, just east of Ke Sat, suggests enemy plans for increased action that area, possibly in conjunction with interdiction Hung Yen route.

1. Bridge across Thai Binh River there most vulnerable link Hanoi-Haiphong LOC.



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VII. New plan: retain French units southern delta.

A. French apparently wish avoid reorganization in face enemy threat, also doubt Vietnamese ability hold area.

B. Extent insecurity southern delta indicated by closing spinning and weaving mills in Nam Dinh; this one of largest manufacturing enterprises in Indochina.

VIII. Meanwhile, security five once-safe provinces South Vietnam said by Vietnamese officer to have deteriorated markedly last half year.


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A. He blames poor pay, inadequate arms local militia and corruption, incompetence local governments; says Vietnamese army "concerned much more with tailoring of uniform and unearned decorations than with primary purpose of combating Communist enemy."

B. His opinion--unless remedied, "all would be lost" these provinces within two or three months.

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